

From the Corner: Protecting Children



Our Office was pleased to be part of the group that accepted the recent Commissioners Court's resolution designating April as Child Abuse Prevention Month. The resolution and the number of agencies on hand for its presentation show the interest the County has in this serious issue. George Ford, Executive Director of the County's Department of Protective Services, remarked that this is the 50th anniversary year of the creation of a Harris County department devoted to child welfare.

Lynn Chamberlain, Tiffany Reedy, and Curtrina Majors were also present to represent our Office for the important work we do on behalf of Harris County Protective Services, the Texas Department of Protective Services, and the Children's Assessment Center in cases involving abused or neglected children.

One of the most difficult and important types of cases our office handles are those involving abused or neglected children. The numbers are alarming. Our office filed 1,255 child abuse and neglect cases in 2015. We have over 3,017 pending cases at this time. 3,850 children are currently in protective custody outside their homes in Harris County.

Over one-third of our office is devoted to cases involving abused or neglected children. Our attorneys, investigators and staff who work in this area have a passion for what they do. They know that what they do can literally save the life of a child; they know that what they do can lead to healing within families and the re-uniting of children and their parents through counseling and other family services. They know that what they do can lead to children finding permanent homes with loving families.

We can all join with Commissioners Court to say thank you to the men and women of the Office of the Harris County Attorney, Harris County Protective Services for Children, the Texas Department of Protective Services, the Children's Assessment Center, and the other agencies and departments that work to protect and serve the children of Harris County. - Vince

Law librarians attend HALL spring seminar



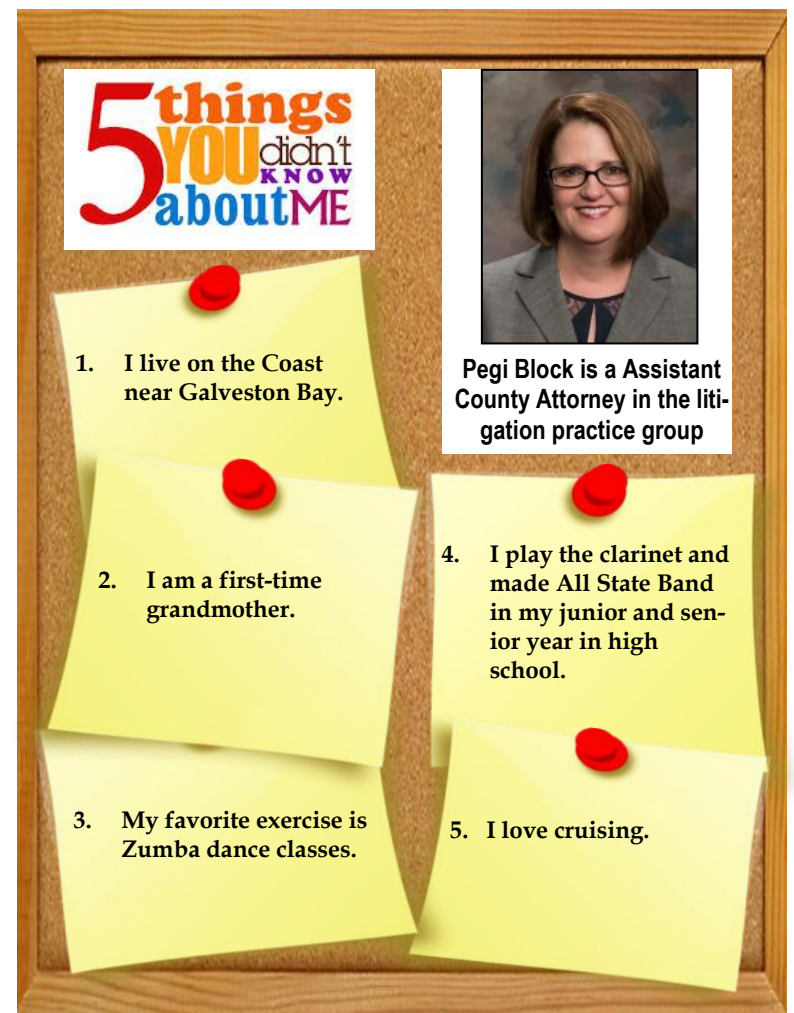
Law Library Director Mariann Sears (center), Deputy Director Joe Lawson (right), and Assistant Law Librarian Heather Holmes (left) attended the Houston Area Law Librarians Spring Seminar – Legal Research for the Boom and Bust – on March 9 at South Texas College of Law. As HALL VP, Joe also organized the event, which featured programs on international arbitration research and oil and gas law and research, providing three hours of CLE credit for HALL members who are licensed in Texas.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month



(From left) Commissioner Steve Radack, Harris County Precinct Three, Tiffany Reedy, Assistant County Attorney, Commissioner Jack Morman, Harris County Precinct Two, Harris County Judge Ed Emmett, Harris County Attorney Vince Ryan, Harris County Protective Services For Children and Adults George Ford, Executive Director, Children's Assessment Center Elaine Stolte, Executive Director, Commissioner Gene L. Locke, Harris County Precinct One, Curtrina Majors, Protective Services Administrative Manager, Commissioner R. Jack Cagle, Harris County Precinct Four, and Lynn Chamberlin, Senior Assistant County Attorney were present during the March 29th Commissioners Court session which proclaimed April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Commissioners Court has proclaimed the month of April as Child Abuse prevention Month. The Protective Services Group, about one-third of the HCAO, handles cases involving abused or neglected children. The month features special days to highlight the work the County and others. Friday, April 8th is Wear Blue Day and Stick Out Your Tongue to Child Abuse Day.





WE, THE MEMBERS OF THE HARRIS COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE, BOTH LAWYERS AND NON-LAWYERS, ADHERE TO THE HIGHEST STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL AND PERSONAL ETHICS AS WE SERVE THE PEOPLE OF HARRIS COUNTY AND STRIVE TO BE THE BEST PUBLIC LAW FIRM IN THE UNITED STATES.



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CLE: Court Reporting 101 & Litigation Support

CAO Conference Center Two

12:00 PM – 1:00 PM

Tuesday, April 5



We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not figures on a dial. We should count time by heart throbs. - Philip James Bailey

HCAO continues battle against Kush



March was a busy month in our fight against Kush, so-called synthetic marijuana which is the second most abused drug among teenagers. Our Office negotiated a court order on March 4th to close a Montrose-area smoke shop selling synthetic marijuana. The order also forbids the owners of Fantasy Smoking and Accessories at 1340 Westheimer from selling illicit synthetic drugs at any other location.

In another case, Moon Mart, 10010 La Porte Freeway, was ordered on March 23rd to stop selling or buying synthetic marijuana. The order banned the sale of potpourri, incense, bath salts, or herbal cigarettes that contain an illicit synthetic drug."

In the third case filed this month Judge Mike Miller, 11th District Court, issued an order on Monday, March 28th against Jams Smoke Shop at 1319 FM 1960 near Ella Boulevard. The order prohibits Jams Smoke Shop from selling or buying synthetic marijuana or any other "illicit synthetic drug." The store closed within a few days after the order was issued.

The lawsuit against Jams was the eighth filed since June 2015 when the Office of the Attorney General and the Office of the Harris County Attorney joined forces to use the state's consumer protection laws to combat businesses that sell synthetic marijuana. Rosemarie Donnelly was the lead attorney on these three cases with assistance from paralegal Leslie Austin and many others in the Office.



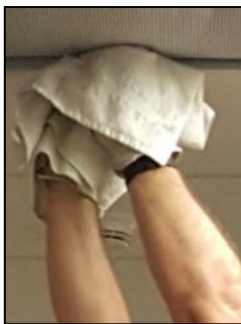
Quintanilla appointed ACA

Manuel Quintanilla has been appointed Assistant County Attorney assigned to the Environmental Practice Group. Manny earned his law degree from Texas Southern University Thurgood Marshall School of Law. He served as a deputy constable for Precinct One from 2006 through 2011 and most recently worked as a compliance coordinator for the Harris County Department of Engineering.

A Batman visits the 17th floor



A fruit bat was found napping by one of the air vents on the 17th floor on March 30th. A real Batman, a county pest control officer, removed the bat and released it into the wild. Most likely the bat entered through an elevator shaft the night before while during repairs. No animals or county employees were harmed in the making of these photos.



HCAO family to "feud" on April 20th



Join your friends at the Office of the Harris County Attorney to find out what the survey says at the 2016 Annual Recognition Ceremony on Wednesday, April 20, from 3 to 4 p.m., at the HCAO Conference Center, 1019 Congress. In addition to playing

a "friendly" game of Family Feud focused on topics of interest to our Office family, we will be honoring those employees who have dedicated years of service to the County. Please contact Cara Protain if you would like to help. Refreshments will be served.

Former ACA John Gascoigne passes away

John Mark Gascoigne, 68, passed away on March 7th. John and his wife, Neva, were in private practice together in Houston for most of their legal careers. In 2001 John joined the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services as an attorney and worked their until 2006 when he began handling child protection cases for the HCAO until his retirement in 2013. John said of his career. "It is very rewarding if you ultimately achieve a good outcome. I tell jurors before trial that they are about to hear the most important case in the courthouse because it involves the life of a child."



12th Women in Leadership Symposium



L-R: Jacqueline Terrell, Gene Gundersen, Chan Buckner, Karen Dunn, Julie Countiss, Dori Wind, Debbie Dillard, Renee Lowe and Melanie Rodney

On Thursday, March 10 members of our office attended the 12th annual Gulf Coast Women in Leadership Symposium at Bayou City Event Center. The topic was "Secure Your Place at the Table." Women interested in developing their leadership skills were given tips and inspiring messages on developing leadership potential, finding their voices and branding. The Symposium was presented by the Texas Diversity Council. ACA Melanie Rodney won a mentoring session with panelist Tandra Jackson, Managing Partner, KPMG LLP.